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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR
DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR S/SRAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2020
TAGS: AF MT NATO PGOV PREL
SUBJECT: MALTA: GOM WILL STUDY PFP SOFA, OFFERS TRAINING
FOR AFGHAN CIVIL SERVANTS

Classified By: Ambassador Douglas Kmiec, for reasons 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a wide-ranging discussion with the personal assistant (Chief of Staff) to Malta Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, the Government of Malta (GOM) indicated possible willingness to sign the "Agreement among the States parties to the North Atlantic Treaty and the other States participating in the Partnership for Peace regarding the status of their forces" (the Pfp SOFA), and to provide training to Afghan civil servants in a yet to be specified curriculum in Malta. End Summary.

SOFA

¶2. (C) During a regularly scheduled monthly meeting with Ambassador, Prime Minister Gonzi's personal assistant and representative, Edgar Galea-Curmi, indicated that the GOM was still reviewing how to approach the SOFA issue, but that progress had been made. According to Galea-Curmi, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg, who had been the primary opponent and chief skeptic of signing a SOFA (on political grounds), had following extensive discussions with the Ambassador recently dropped that opposition and agreed that the government should consider a SOFA "in some form or another." What remained to be determined was what parameters the SOFA needed, and how Malta could meet U.S. "expectations." Galea-Curmi advised that the FM would be in touch with Ambassador Kmiec to discuss these issues.

¶3. (C) Ambassador took this opportunity to raise the Pfp SOFA with Galea-Curmi, noting that it was a document which was sufficiently broad that many other countries had been able to accept it, including Russia, Croatia and - hopefully in the near future - another neutral EU State, Ireland. Ambassador stressed that this would be an opportunity to show, politically, that Malta was in charge of the SOFA process and not doing the U.S.'s bidding. He noted (as Maltese defense officials have already advised us they are aware) that in some cases countries signing the Pfp SOFA and protocols have done so with reservations, but cautioned that any reservations should not have the effect of rendering the document meaningless. Galea-Curmi expressed his understanding of this point. He indicated that he would be in touch with the FM and Attorney General to determine what legislation would be necessary to implement the SOFA and indicated that he foresaw no difficulty with obtaining Parliamentary approval provided the political decision was made to go forward.

Afghanistan Assistance

¶4. (SBU) On Afghanistan, Ambassador noted that the London Conference was due to take place on January 28, and asked about what Malta could offer in the way of assistance to the stabilization effort. Galea-Curmi repeated FM Borg's recent

public statements that Malta was willing to provide training in Malta on subjects such as public administration or law enforcement. The only firm limits on type of training was that it could not be military aid or training, and that it would have to take into account Malta's limited resources. He agreed to provide a description of what kind of training would be available, but added that it would be helpful if the U.S. could specify what types of training were needed by the Government of Afghanistan, so that Malta could focus its offer.

Comment

¶5. (C) The seeming willingness to consider signing the PfP SOFA represents a change in heart on the part of Malta. Both that dialogue and the broader public debate over the meaning of neutrality that was sparked by the Ambassador's public comments and a recent Op-Ed have helped strengthen the U.S.-Malta relationship by conveying to Malta that if it wishes to be an equal partner on the world stage, it must undertake the same obligations -- even if the scale is smaller, commensurate with Malta's resources -- as other similarly situated nations.

KMIEC